

## Dingus by Elillierose

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** Angst, Coughing, Fever, Flu, Fluff, Friendship, Gen, Hurt/Comfort, Illness, Just some guilty pleasure, Platonic Relationships, Pre-Season/Series 03, Sickfic, Sickness, Vomiting, Wholesome, h/c

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Dustin Henderson, Robin Buckley, Steve Harrington

**Status:** Completed

**Published:** 2021-06-20

**Updated:** 2021-06-20

**Packaged:** 2022-03-31 13:54:04

**Rating:** Teen And Up Audiences

**Warnings:** Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

**Chapters:** 1

**Words:** 5,799

**Publisher:** archiveofourown.org

**Summary:**

When the kids show up to Scoops for their regular movie viewing, Steve isn't there and Robin has no info for them. With plans to do something else for the night, the kids go to leave. But, on a pit stop to the bathroom, Dustin discovers their teenage friend having a bit of a rough time.

In which Steve is sick and Dustin and Robin look after him.

# Dingus

## Author's Note:

Wrote this about a year or so ago. Just now posting.  
^-^ Only wrote it for some good 'ol wholesomeness.  
Hope ya like! I miss this fandom so much! ;A;

Not much to this one. Really just a guilty pleasure, fluff fic. XD

Dustin was the first to the counter, zero hesitation for his hand to hit the bell. Once, twice, three times he rang it in quick succession. He continued to do so until finally, Robin bounded into view and slapped her hand on the bell before he could ring it again.

“What?” she asked with a heavy sigh.

“Where is he?” Mike asked, cutting to the chase, already next to Dustin, hands gripping the edge of the counter.

The teen rolled her eyes and leaned forward, arms crossed on the surface. “Sorry kids, mama isn’t here,” she replied with a forced smirk. Quickly, Robin glanced at the time. “In fact, he’s already an hour late. Guess you’re better off looking elsewhere,” she said, pushing herself away from the counter.

“Son of a bitch, Steve,” Dustin muttered under his breath. “You know where else he might be?”

Robin shrugged with a huff. “Your guess is as good as mine. But hey, if you find him, deliver a message for me. Tell him next time he wants to ditch work, the least he can do is give a call. Oh, and one more thing, give him this as well.” Dustin went to reach out his hand, expecting her to hand something over, but paused when his gaze landed on her middle finger.

“Oh,” the kid mumbled, “Uh, yeah, sure.”

He turned to the others and gave them a small shrug. “So now what?” he asked, scanning the four of them. “No Steve, no movies.” His eyes cut over to Will, already knowing what he was about to

suggest before a single sound passed his lips.

“Can’t we just play D&D?” Will asked, just as everyone expected. To be fair though, it had been a while, and they really were left with nothing to do after their evening plans were just tossed out the window. “I already have a quick campaign thought up, so if we go now, we can probably finish by tonight. If you guys want to...that is?”

Lucas took a deep breath, but before he could, Robin cut him off. “Whatever you twerps do, do it somewhere else, you’re holding up the line.” She waved a hand, gesturing to the few people tapping their feet behind them. They cleared their throats awkwardly, and with tight apologies, shuffled to the side.

“Alright, I guess that’s the plan then,” Mike sighed. But no one missed the quick way his eyes darted to the clock and back. “But, we have to make it quick, I ha-”

“Yeah, yeah, we know,” Lucas interrupted. “We all know you can’t go more than five minutes without sucking each other’s faces.”

“That’s not tru-”

“Boys!” Max snapped. “That’s enough. We don’t have much time and you two are wasting what we have. Let’s just go already.” Her arms were folded loosely as she leaned heavily on one leg, patience almost visibly draining from her features. “Well, are we just going to stand here now?”

There wasn’t any arguing after that, just a few swiftly exchanged glances before they were on their way. “Hold up,” Dustin called out, stopping a few feet behind them. After they gave their appointed groans, he jabbed a thumb towards the restroom, I’ll just be a few. Go on ahead, I’ll catch up.” They didn’t need to be told twice.

He wasted no time stepping in and instantly headed towards the farthest stall. As soon as his palm touched the door, he paused, brows knitting as a scowl fell over his face. Dustin cut his attention to the stall a few doors down, sure that it was retching he was hearing. He tried to ignore it and pushed the door halfway open when the

gruesome noise echoed again. Once more, he was going to try and not pay it any mind. Wanted to, but there was a small groan that followed that last bout of sickness that was a bit too familiar.

Dustin took a step closer in time for a soft ‘Dammit’ to filter out. Now he was certain. Closing the rest of the distance, he softly tapped at the door of it. What he didn’t expect was for it to be unlocked and open slowly with a long creak.

The kid’s eyes widened slightly. “Steve?” he whispered, gazing down at the teen. He sat there, one arm still hugged around the bowl with his back against the stall wall. Half-alarmed, his head snapped towards Dustin, staring like a deer caught in headlights. “The hell are you doing in here?” Dustin asked. The guy was even in his uniform, the only thing missing was his hat which was nowhere to be seen.

Steve didn’t say anything for a moment and offered a one-shoulder shrug. “Flying a damn airplane. What’s it look like?” he finally answered, and Dustin couldn’t help but wince at the sound of his voice. “Was on my way to work and had to make a pit stop.” He cleared his throat with a small wince of his own. “Almost made it there.”

Dustin was at a loss for words and had to shake his head to will his mouth to finally move. “No shit...” He stepped in and crouched in front of the brunet, getting a good look at him. To be honest, he looked ready for death. He was pale aside from the tinge of red across his cheeks. And the moist sheen wasn’t doing the guy any favors. Eyes locked, Dustin pressed the back of his hand against Steve’s forehead. A low hiss escaped. “You’re burning up,” he muttered, dropping his hand. “Why didn’t you just stay home if you’re sick?”

“Dad’s home,” Steve sighed. “And I’d much rather be anywhere else right now.”

“Did you drive here?” He couldn’t help the slightly panicked pitch, but it was a real concern of his.

“Well, I sure as hell didn’t walk.”

Dustin pinched the bridge of his nose. "Alright, well guess we should get you out of here. Don't know where you should go, but it can't be here on the floor. Come on." He got to his feet and held out his hand. Steve surprisingly accepted the offer, almost yanking the kid down in the process. "Ok, easy," he grunted once Steve was on his feet. For a few seconds there he sought out assistance from the wall to stay upright. Clumps of sodden hair flopped in his face as he swayed precariously.

"M'fine," he mumbled, face now pressed against the wall. He took a deep breath, only to instantly realize it was a mistake when he was thrown into a fit of coughing. One hand desperately planted on the wall, he nearly doubled over until it eventually passed. Dustin didn't think it was possible, but that short episode left the teen even paler and out of breath.

"Steve, you're not about to pass out on me, are you? Because I can't carry you."

Steve slowly - absently - shook his head. Even though his gaze was on the other, it was clear he wasn't exactly seeing him at the moment, just gazing in his direction.

"Ok, good. I need you to stay with me here. Actually, do you think you can walk?"

The other paused, eyes narrowed and lips pressed firmly together. About half a minute passed and Dustin was ready to ask again, sure he must have just missed the question. Then, a low hum and Steve sagged more heavily against his support. "Just need a moment," he muttered, squeezing his eyes shut.

Dustin exhaled shortly. "Alright, I'll just take that as a no. Do you think you can at least stay right here? Standing, right here? Just don't go anywhere, alright?" All he got in return was a nod. That was enough though, he'd just have to be fast. "Ok, I'll be right back, d-don't move." He pointed a finger of warning at Steve and disappeared around the corner.

The moment he was out of the bathroom, Dustin paused.

‘ *Shit* .’ Who was he even supposed to get? The others were likely already on their way to Mike’s - or still waiting outside, and even so, it wasn’t like they could give Steve a ride on their bikes. Because there was no way he was going to be ok with him driving anywhere right now. He bit his bottom lip, head turning in the direction of Scoops. Slowly, he took a deep breath as he caught a glimpse of Robin.

“No other choice, I guess,” he sighed with a jerk of his head. He quickly closed the distance between himself and the parlor, getting an eerie sense of *deja vu* when he met the teen’s deadpanned gaze.

“He’s still no-”

“No, no, I know, but listen.” He held up both hands, beckoning her to just let him finish. “Do you have a car? It’s urgent.”

Her brows arched as a forced smile graced her face. “Uh, what?” she asked, clearly caught a bit off guard. “No, but why?” Once more, her arms were crossed over the counter.

Dustin chewed on his bottom lip some more, eyes dropped to the floor. “Dammit...”

“Is that all you need? Because I kinda ha-”

“No, no no,” he blurted out. “Look, Steve isn’t here, but I know where he is now. But, uh, I sorta need some help with him...” his voice heightened a tad at the end. “He’s in the bathroom over there puking his brains out. So, need a bit of help with that.” He gave an awkward shrug just as Robin dropped her head down with an expelled sigh.

Something was muttered under her breath, something the kid didn’t quite catch. “I’m not really supposed to leave this place unattended, but...” she trailed off, snatching her hat off, “this place sucks anyway, so screw it, I guess.” She slapped her hat down on the counter and stepped out from behind it. “Alright, lead the way before the Dingus wanders off and gets himself lost.”

Dustin was already moving before the words even had a chance to pass her lips. He moved as quickly as he could without falling into a

full out sprint. Stopping right in front of the bathroom, but as he turned around to speak, he was shoved past and he blinked in confusion. "W-Wait, that's the boy's-"

"Don't care," Robin called back.

"Ok then," Dustin whispered, following after.

There was no need to go further, not when the man himself was right in view as soon as they entered. Standing there - if you could really call it there - hands on the counter as the faucet ran on full blast. He stared down, not even reacting when they drew closer. But, he did jolt when Robin placed a hand on his shoulder, drawing his attention.

"Wha!" he blurted, flinching. As soon as he recognized her face, he huffed out and calmed back down. Wait. "What're you doing...in here?" he asked.

She didn't gratify the question with an answer, just placed her hand against his forehead, just as Dustin had done. Robin pursed her lips. Steve leaned slightly into the touch, but she chose not to comment on that. He allowed a small groan to escape when she eventually pulled her touch away, much to his disapproval.

"Well, there's no question, definitely a fever," she muttered, mostly to herself.

Steve rolled his eyes, "Yeah, no shit."

Robin less than gently grabbed his face, making him look her in the eyes. "Dingus, cut the sarcasm for a few minutes, yeah?" He gave a weak nod. The lack of protesting was mildly unsettling to say the least. But the more she looked him over, the more it made sense. There definitely was no denying that he was sick. "You should have just stayed home if you were feeling like garbage," she mumbled, brushing some damp hair to get a better look at his eyes.

Steve's mouth pressed and he glanced to Dustin before bringing his attention back to Robin. "Just didn't want to stay there," he replied, clearing his throat.

The others didn't say anything right away, but it was clear he had his

own reasons, and neither cared to press the matter. Perhaps another time. "Alright, well you can't stay here," she said. "Is there anywhere else you can go? Because you sure as hell aren't going to work, not like this. You'll spread your disease to the whole damn town."

He just turned back towards the sink and lowered his head again. A few moments of silence drifted by until he couldn't take it anymore. "I-I don't know. I mean m'fine with just staying right here."

"Steve, you're not staying in a public bathroom," Robin stated matter-of-factly. "Look, my parents are gone for the weekend, so if you need to crash on the couch for a day or two, then that's fine. But you're not staying here." She held out her hand, "Give me your keys and tell me where you parked."

He slowly shook his head. "I can drive," he insisted and went to push himself away from the counter. It was a valiant attempt for the most part. That is until he shoved himself straight into Robin, nearly knocking both of them off their feet. Fortunately, she was able to remain upright and grab a hold of him before he ended up on the floor.

"Drive, my ass, you can barely walk, Harrington." She hefted him up, one arm firmly around his waist. "Now come on." She gave him a sideways glance as they exited the mall and the first wave of heat hit her. She then looked to Dustin, whose tense expression reflected her thoughts. "I'm still going to need you to tell me where you parked though."

Steve rolled his head to the side with an exasperated exhale, but he relented. Robin just nodded. It wasn't as close as she would have liked, but it was manageable. Still, she was a bit impressed with the fact that he walked that far in this heat as sick as he was. To be fair, that likely didn't do him any favors. They could make it, though, as long as they kept this pace up.

And make it they did, with the three of them panting for breath. "Ok, give me your keys," Robin ordered, hand outstretched and fingers wiggling.

The teen pressed his lips together, but didn't argue while his free



hand searched his pockets. It took a bit of shuffling and hushed complaints before they jingled against his fingertips. With a small, tired smirk, he lifted them between his thumb and forefinger. A split second later, they were snatched in the other's hand and Robin instantly unlocked the passenger side, practically shoving him in.

Steve gave a small noise as he more or less dropped into the seat, one arm wrapping tightly around his torso, almost protectively. He ground out a growl and tightly closed his eyes, only prying one a sliver at Robin's quiet apology.

He waved a hand and shuffled away from the door so she could shut it. Once in, it wasn't long until the others were in and Robin was starting it up. That was when the situation finally clicked in Steve's foggy mind. "W-Wait," he muttered, sitting straighter and eyes widening. "You...you know how to drive, right?" His hand reached out and hovered over hers as if there was actually something he would have been able to do.

"Relax, Harrington, I know what I'm doing. Besides, right now I'm sure I'm a hell of a lot better than you."

Reluctantly, he sank into his seat with a heavy exhale and a nearly silent groan. His head fell to the side, right against the window where he pressed it closer in hopes it would somehow alleviate his throbbing head. There must have been some point between then and later where he dozed off because next time he opened his eyes, the surroundings were completely different. The moment his eyes opened halfway, his vision blurred with the passing environment.

In fact, just a few seconds of staring at it had his whole head spinning. Mouth pinched, the next best thing he could think to do was bang his fist against the door with a few panicked whines.

"Robin, pull over!" Dustin called from the back.

She didn't ask any questions, and luckily there were no other cars to be seen for surely there would have been some sort of accident. She swerved to the side - much to Steve's disapproval. Before the car was even at a full stop, he had his door open and fell out to his hands and knees. Robin and Dustin joined by his side just in time for the show

to start. Both were at a loss of what to do, these kinds of situations weren't exactly their fortes. Without any other idea, Dustin crouched down, one hand stiffly patting the teen's back as he averted his gaze before he got sick as well.

"There...there...let it all out," he muttered between Steve's dry heaving. He gave the guy some time, waited until a good half a minute passed without incident before asking, "All good there, bud?" There was a few seconds of silence until he received a quick, tense nod and a pathetic hum. "Alright, need help getting up?"

Steve swallowed thickly as he leaned back on his heels and tilted his head back. "N-No, I think m'good." He took a deep, steadying breath - one that hitched once it hit his abused throat. However, his immediate stumble told a different story, and Robin once again had to step in to keep him on his feet. She wasn't sure how to feel about the fact that his head instantly fell against her shoulder.

"Alright, let's just get you situated," she muttered, casting a swift, concerned glance at Dustin. Neither of them exchanged any words though as they got Steve back in his seat - who was clearly losing a battle against sleep. For the rest of their trip, Robin was sure to take it slower and threw over the occasional checking eye. Luckily he was completely out for the rest of the way.

It took longer than she cared for, but eventually she pulled up at her house without any other pit stops. One glance over at Steve, and she almost felt guilty at having to wake him. But it was still rather hot and with the fever he clearly had, they needed to get him inside.

"Steve?" she said, surprisingly softly.

He stirred lightly, but didn't seem to really acknowledge her voice.

"Hey, Steve," she said louder, reaching over to give his shoulder an easy nudge. This was fortunately enough for him to open one eye enough to cut over at her.

"What?" he half croaked, a hand ran down his face with a cringe. He peeked from behind his fingers, looking from one to the other, a gleam of confusion in his stare. But once he glanced around, the last

few hours of events fell into place. Right, he went to work, or tried to, and then had to stop to throw up, and now here he was...at Robin's...house.

He didn't say much, or anything really, between the car to the front door. He barely wanted to give the fact that he was so heavily depending on Robin to walk any attention. To be honest, the only thing he was focused on was getting the chance to lie down and go back to sleep because damn he was tired.

Steve let out an involuntary moan when the door swung open and a wave of cool air hit him. A relishing moment that was short lived by a shiver that rippled through him. He wasn't sure if it was his fevered brain or not, but he was sure Robin pulled him in just a little closer. His body was moving on autopilot now, just following suit with hers towards the couch where he was eased down.

"Ok, Steve, stay right here, I just need to go grab a few things," she instructed, off before he could reply.

Dustin, however, remained by his side, rocking back and forth on his feet. But his eyes rested on the teen, who appeared positively miserable lying there, one arm draped over his eyes. Even so, the discomfort in his expression was clear. Slowly, he shifted the limb until he could catch a glimpse of the kid.

"Enjoying the view?" he croaked, a ghost of a smirk teasing the corner of his mouth.

The kid shrugged with a little snort. "Not particularly, no." He sighed softly and took a seat on the arm of the couch, closer to Steve's feet to give the guy at least a little bit of space. Lord knew he already lost quite a decent amount of dignity in the last hour. He tapped his fingers along his knees, humming lowly to himself in a sad attempt to fill the silence.

Of course, Steve wasn't very appreciative of the extra noise as he pressed the heel of his hand against his temple with a soft whine.

"Sorry," Dustin muttered, instantly quieting. "How, uh, how're you feeling?" he asked, waving a hand in Steve's direction.

Steve bitterly chuckled at the inquiry and dropped his arm away from his head, letting it fall to hang off the edge of the couch. "Like shit," he answered honestly. He let out a few dry coughs followed by a quick swear just as Robin strolled back in, supplies in her arms. "What's with all that?" Steve narrowed his eyes.

"Just a few things," she replied flatly, depositing them on the table. The first things Steve made out were a bowl of water, a cloth and some bottles of something, but he couldn't tell exactly what. He didn't get a chance to ask or get a better look either because something was jammed in his mouth as soon as he opened it to ask. "Give that a couple minutes," Robin muttered, the back of her hand back on his forehead. He just simply obeyed.

The silence was killing him. More likely, the ringing in his ears from the silence was killing him. So he was beyond thankful when Robin took the device from his mouth with a click of her tongue.

"Alright...ok," she said softly, brows knitted closely.

"What is it?" Steve pressed, propping himself part way on his elbows. Of course, he was pushed right back down.

Robin bit her bottom lip. "Well, it's higher than I'd like. But if you really wanna know, about 102." Not quite in the danger zone, but too close for her comfort.

"Oh."

"Yeah, oh," she repeated. "Alright, I have a few things for you to take, that is if you think you can keep them down. Uh, there's something for nausea, something for fever...and some pain relievers. Not sure exactly what you want, but guess you can take your pick."

Steve tossed a hand in the air. "I don't care, whatever will knock me out, I guess." He winced, regretting allowing his voice to raise to the degree it did. His throat burned from the misuse.

"Guess a little of everything it is, then," Robin sighed. "Ok, should probably give something for the fever first, I suppose." She filtered through the bottles until she came across it and dumped a couple in

her hand. "Here," she handed them over, "I'll be right back with some water."

Steve just stared at the pills, lips pulled in subtle disgust. He could almost sense the remaining color drain from his face. He really wasn't comfortable with swallowing anything right now, but when Robin handed him the glass, he no longer thought about it. Just had a need to get this over with as quickly as possible. He flinched as he forced them down and choked down just enough water to help them down. Shoving the water back, he pressed the back of his hand against his mouth, fighting off a gag.

"You good?"

He held his breath, and when things seemed to settle, he nodded carefully. "Mmhhh," he hummed, shoulders slouching.

"Guess we'll give that some time then just to be sure, then maybe something for the nausea." Though, now that she thought about it, maybe the other order would have made more sense. But whatever, it was too late now. "In the meantime, maybe this will help a little." His eyes were closed, so he had no idea what she was doing, but it became obvious by the cool, damp rag that dabbed over his forehead.

So enthralled in the welcomed sensations, he almost vocalized his complaints when it eventually left him. He cracked a bleary eye open just as the rag was replaced, soaked with fresh, cool water. Just as suddenly, he was lost again, sinking deeper into the cushions.

As the other two watched this losing battle with sleep, they shared a quick glance. Even as his head leaned more into Robin's hand and his breathing steadied, he was still far from restful. His face was tense and he let out the occasional whine. It was almost like if either of them so much as moved, he would easily wake back up.

Slowly, Robin eased the cloth away, stiffening when Steve mumbled something under his breath, but quickly quieted. She cut her eyes at the other medicines. Though she'd prefer he take something else before sleeping, she figured it might just be better to let him get some rest first while he could. Regardless of how effective it really was.

The both of them had the same idea as they both rose to their feet slowly, taking steps like walking too heavily would set off a bomb.

They practically tiptoed their way into the kitchen and both of them sank into a couple chairs opposite one another. Robin huffed out a breath, leaning with her elbows on the table.

“Not how I expected to spend my Friday,” she sighed with a brow raise. “And after this, I’m sure neither of us will have a job to go back to.” Despite her words, she didn’t seem too torn up over the idea.

“Yeah, me neither. We were supposed to go to the movies, but that didn’t happen, so then we were sup- oh shit!” he exclaimed, slamming both hands on the table and jumping to his feet. “Where’s your phone? I need to call the others and let them know where I am.” He had completely forgotten.

Without a word, Robin jabbed a thumb behind her.

Dustin nearly tripped over the legs of the chairs in his hurry. He swore under his breath with each number he pressed, and continued until the phone was finally answered. If asked, he likely couldn’t repeat the conversation exchanged, it was merely him blurting out the events that took place once they parted ways. And once he hung up, he was taking a deep, long breath.

“You know, it is getting pretty late,” Robin said softly. “Isn’t it about time to start heading home?”

He shook his head. “Nah, it’s fine. Besides, not gonna leave that with you,” he said, nodding his head in Steve’s direction. “I know how much of a handful he can be. As if on cue, a series of coughs echoed through to the kitchen. Both of them cringed outwardly at the roughness of them. They didn’t calm down right away either, beckoning them to go check.

Dustin was the first to kneel at the teen’s side, who was now sitting up, leaned forward while the hacking racked his form. “You’re not gonna be sick, are you?” he asked, already preparing to rush the guy to the bathroom should the need arise. But, Steve held a hand out in denial with the other pressed against his chest.

"F'ne," he wheezed out between coughs. "Shit." He was left panting for breath by the time it was over, still hunched over.

"Don't need to haul your ass to the hospital, do we?" Robin half-joked, but the smile didn't quite reach her eyes.

Steve rolled his eyes with a forced snort. "No, Jesus, m'not dying." The other two eyed him suspiciously. From the sound of his voice, he may as well have been on his way. "Just need some water," he whispered this time, sparing his throat. The moment he tried to push himself up, there were two pairs of hands pushing him back down, two on each shoulder.

"Uh, you're staying right there," Robin said. "You look like you're ready to pass out, and I'm not having a concussion on top of you coughing your lungs out, all right?"

There was a twitch in his face, indicating a protest incoming, but it flickered away, and he instead dropped his head back against the back of the couch. His arms then wrapped around himself to suppress another shiver.

"I'll get some water, Dustin, there's some blankets in the closet over there, just grab one, will ya?"

He gave a mock, two-fingered salute, walked the few feet and plucked the first one he saw. He couldn't help the amused chuckle at the cat pattern that adorned it. The cover was more or less tossed over the shuddering teen, who gripped it and tugged it tighter around himself without a word. He pulled his legs closer and curled up until he was almost a tight-wound ball. Then he shuffled closer to the corner in order to rest his head to the side without actually lying back down.

"Here, Dingus." Robin held out the glass of water. But pulled it away when he reached for it. "Just remember...small sips."

He nodded, and accepted the beverage slower. Eyes locked on her, he forced himself to take only a couple, cautious sips. It took every fiber of his will not to chug it with how dry his throat and mouth were.

“I think you should also go ahead and get some more medicine in you. That is, if you’re feeling fine with that right now.” He gave a subtle go ahead as his free hand rose to cradle his head. The others could only assume it was due to a worsening headache. “You know what, I think it’s fine to just take the others.” She shook out the correct dosage and handed them over. “Once you get those down, I want to check your temperature again.” Her eyes scanned his face: it was still pale and glistening. But at least his eyes shone with a tad more lucidity.

The moment he followed her instructions, the thermometer was back in his mouth, but not without his string of complaints. She gave it some time and plucked it right back out with a soft hum. “Well, it’s a little lower. So, that’s good, I suppose. Not by much, though.”

‘ *By half a degree* ,’ she thought to herself. Better than nothing.

“You feel any better, or about the same?” ‘ *Look at him* ,’ she told herself with an eye roll. Of course he still felt like shit, she didn’t know why she bothered asking. She should have also expected the blank look he gave her in response. “Right.” Everything about this situation was just completely out of her comfort zone. The whole caring thing, and the fact that it just had to be Steve of all people only added to the whole wrongness of all this. But, she released a sigh anyway and pushed some hair out of his face.

Dustin could only watch, shifting uncomfortably on his feet, but he chose to say nothing. He did glance at the clock though, and it really was starting to get late now. He didn’t realize how fast time passes when you’re busy making sure an idiot doesn’t die.

Robin must have picked up on the same because she glanced from Steve to the clock. “Hm, you should probably try to get some rest now if you think you can.”

She rose to her feet, not missing the small change in his expression. But he shook his disappointment off and just tried to make himself more comfortable. Which would have appeared perfectly natural if it weren’t for a particularly violent shudder. He glanced, hoping they didn’t notice it. Which was stupid, he knew, no way in hell they didn’t.



And the sympathetic looks he received was proof enough. Tugging the blanket tighter around himself, he jerked himself around until he was facing the back of the couch without a word.

Robin just sighed. It really was like taking care of a child. “Well,” she muttered, turning to Dustin, “you know where the covers and stuff are, guess you can just make a pallet on the floor or something, or sleep in the chair over there. I’m heading to bed, so if anyone needs anything, just come wake me up. Anyone need anything before I go, or are we all good here?”

The other two offered their grunts and hums of satisfaction. “All right, well, bathroom is down the hall to the left.” With that, she gave one last nod and wave before turning her back and heading down the hall.

Once gone, Steve turned his head just enough to peer over his shoulder at the younger. “You know, you didn’t have t’stay here, right?” His voice was more raspy than earlier, as if he no longer put in the effort to not sound quite so miserable. “You could have jus’t left me with Robin and went back with your friends, or whatever.” He cleared his throat, clearly fighting another coughing fit. “Would’ve been fine.” He turned his head back around, turning even farther until his face was completely hidden against the back of the couch.

“Steve, just shut up,” Dustin replied shortly. He walked back to the closet to pull out a stack of blankets and a couple pillows. “I tagged along because I wanted to. Besides, I’m sure you’d do the same, right? So there’s no question about it.” He threw together a quick makeshift bed on the floor next to the couch and tucked himself in as snugly as possible.

Dustin thought he heard something between a soft chuckle and a snort, but wasn’t sure if he was just imagining things. “Who woulda thought,” he nearly whispered, groggily. “Never woulda thought a bunch of pain in the ass kids...” he trailed off with a deep sigh before his breaths evened out.

Dustin was about to reply when the small hitches deterred him. Instead, he lightly smiled and turned around. “Goodnight,” he breathed out before closing his own eyes.

